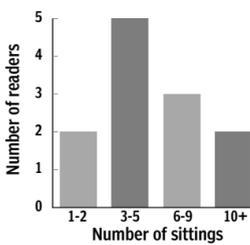


## WHAT THIS IS

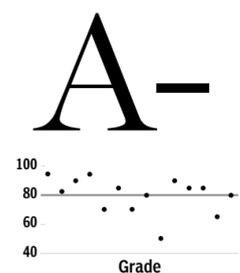
Books coverage generally focuses on writers; this is a page about readers. Specifically, it's about the readers we ask to respond to a new novel each Tuesday. If you'd like to read with us, sign up at [theafterword.ca](http://theafterword.ca)

## STATS

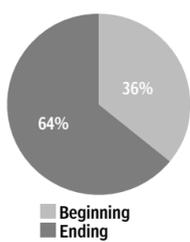
How long did it take to finish this book?



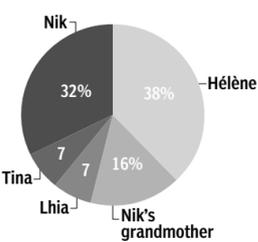
Overall, our readers give this book an



Which was better: the beginning or the ending?



Who is your favourite character?



BE IN THE PAPER & GET FREE BOOKS

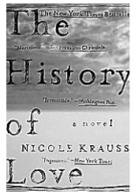


READ ALONG WITH US!

IF YOU LIKE THIS BOOK, YOU'LL LIKE



**Kafka on the Shore by Haruki Murakami.** Although a very different read, there is a similarity about the running away and soul searching of the main characters, both young men.  
*Heidi Hay*



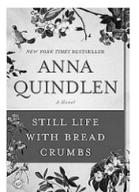
**The History of Love by Nicole Krauss.** Both authors vividly portray their characters' unconventional journeys through powerful imagery.  
*Joanne Kwok*



**Shirley Jackson's The Lottery and Other Short Stories.** Most of the stories are different, yet the appearance of the mysterious Mr. Harris at various times, links them together, leaving the reader feeling they are reading an eclectic novel and not a collection of individual stories.  
*Ashley Gagnon*



**Me before You by Jojo Moyes.** This is a romantic novel that leaves the reader thinking more closely about life choices.  
*Mae Steck*



**Still Life with Breadcrumbs. Anna Quindlen.** It is a beautiful character study – with great insight into the characters, presented with humour and a deep understanding of human nature, love, loss and recovery. A hopeful novel.  
*Sheilagh Pace*



**419 by Will Ferguson.** Lives spanning continents intersect in a way that changes the destinies of those involved. A thriller, a cautionary tale.  
*Nancy Wagner*

## THE READERS:

Heidi Hay *Kamloops, B.C.*; Joanne Kwok *Thornhill, Ont.*; Ashley Gagnon *St. Thomas, Ont.*; Gerry Hilton *Kanata, Ont.*; Patti Gaetan *Burlington, Ont.*; Robin Leighton *Toronto*; Glenda Ainsworth *West Vancouver, B.C.*; Mae Steck *Sudbury, Ont.*; Helen Yeomans *Chilliwack, B.C.*; Sheilagh Pace *Richmond, B.C.*; Judith Pearson *Monarch, Alta.*; Rachel Sandieson *London, Ont.*; Nancy Wagner *Waterloo, Ont.*; Faylene Valdes *Calgary, Alta.*; Robynne Cole *Grimsby, Ont.*

## THE BOOK:

### CIRCLE OF STONES by SUZANNE ALYSSA ANDREW

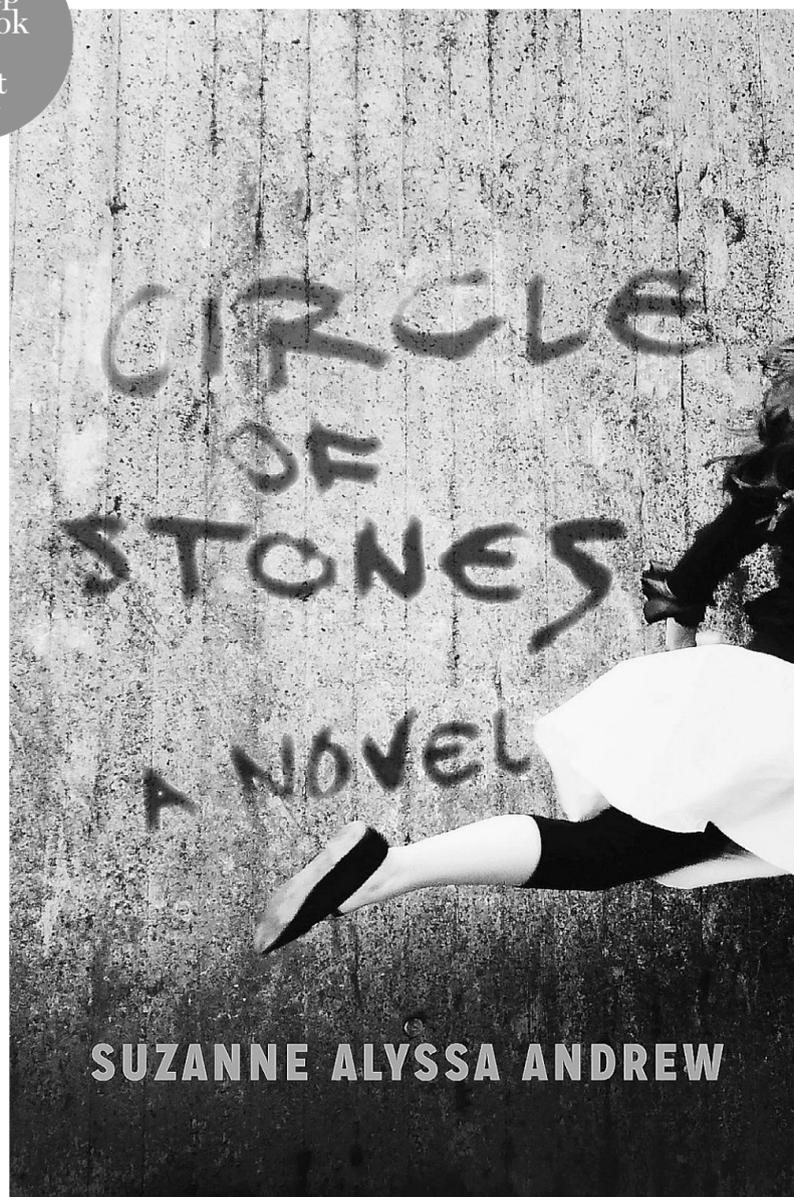
sum up the book in a tweet

The story of a young art student obsessed with his girlfriend as told through tales of others. Initially about isolation, ultimately about redemption.  
*Heidi Hay*

Intriguing tale of interwoven characters showing how choice, fate and life circumstances collide.  
*Judith Pearson*

While Nik is looking for Jennifer, the author shows us how so many lives are oddly, yet always, connected.  
*Rachel Sandieson*

A love sick and obsessed young man goes on a journey to find his girlfriend.



Witness the journey from the perspective of the people. A stunning mosaic, where isolated individuals are intriguingly intertwined.  
*Ashley Gagnon*

A cross-country road trip about two young artists searching for themselves and each other.  
*Glenda Ainsworth*

Circles of family, circles of friends, spanning a continent and connecting, link by link, to a mysterious disappearance.  
*Helen Yeomans*

This book is a love story, a search for human connection. Within the story, we learn that every life affects another, like dominoes falling.  
*Nancy Wagner*

## ASK THE AUTHOR

# 'It's fun to get lost in ideas and see where they take you'

**Sheilagh Pace asks** *Did the title come first, or evolve as the story progressed? Are circles of stones a common sight on Vancouver Island?*

**Suzanne Alyssa Andrew responds** The title evolved and was the brainchild of one of my dearest readers, Samantha Haywood. The book needed something to unite all the characters together and also hint at its structure, so Circle of Stones gives it the perfect shape. Actual circle of stones memorials are an organic thing I saw at the real Rotary Beach Park in Campbell River while on the sea walk. I don't know if there are more along the island or if it's local. The circles create a place to memorialize loved ones after their ashes are thrown into the sea. I think they're beauti-

ful, ephemeral reminders of how temporary everything is.

**Joanne Kwok asks** *Why did you choose to include popular Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto?*

**Suzanne Alyssa Andrew responds** Although the story is fictional, the settings in the novel are real, and chosen because I either lived or visited there and wanted to travel back in my imagination. I'm often homesick for the west coast, and have fond memories of living in Ottawa while studying at Carleton University. It was comforting to write about the coastal scenery and city streets I walked so often, and describe mysterious discoveries there. (There is a real stone retaining wall in Ottawa where you can sometimes

find pictures hidden in the crevices, for instance.) I'd love to write about the east coast, but I'd have to go and spend time there first.

**Ashley Gagnon asks** *Have you made a journey across Canada such as Nik did?*

**Suzanne Alyssa Andrew responds** It's an imagined journey but I've moved around a lot and I'm always struck by how people appear and disappear from one's life. I wanted to capture the idea if we're observant we often see the same faces in our neighbourhoods, without really knowing their stories, and then tell those stories. It's that feeling of having a random yet meaningful conversation on the bus or streetcar, and never seeing that person again, even

though what they said may stay with you for a long time.

**Pedro Steck asks** *Why did you choose to make Nik's first appearance so unnerving?*

**Suzanne Alyssa Andrew responds** Nik is a both talisman and reminder – comforting to his grandmother and Jennifer, and at the same time he embodies the struggle all the characters face, reflecting their disillusionment and grief. Not every journey is easy in fact most are fraught and difficult. But this can be a way to connect, when we see our own pain in others' faces.

**Rachel Sandieson asks** *Why did you write both Nik and Jennifer to have such creative strengths and do you think it would have impacted their relationship if they didn't?*

**Suzanne Alyssa Andrew responds** I think while writing the book I was trying to problem solve questions around the creative life for myself. But I think anyone, from any walk of life can understand the impact singularly focused career ambition (like Jennifer's) or a daydreamer's obsessions (like Nik's) can have on our lives

and relationships. It could have been about two lawyers, though Nik would have been more talkative had that been the case.

**Nancy Wagner asks** *Did Jennifer's tarot cards act as a sort of security blanket for her?*

**Suzanne Alyssa Andrew responds** Yes. Absolutely. The cards give her a sense of control over her own destiny – something she's determined to shape.

**Robynne Cole asks** *What inspired the unusual extreme ironing circumstances in the Lucy chapter?*

**Suzanne Alyssa Andrew responds** I discovered the idea of extreme ironing down an Internet research rabbit hole one day, the same way I learned about reverse graffiti, and I loved both concepts so much I had to write about them. Sometimes it's fun to get lost in ideas and see where they take you and why they're relevant. For Lucy, extreme ironing forms an important bridge between her sense of responsibility to her family and her secret desires for escape and adventure.

## NEXT WEEK'S BOOK

Next Tuesday, The Afterword Reading Society will discuss *At the Water's Edge* by Sarah Gruen

